

**Strand Theatre Task Force  
Community Meeting  
June 1, 2004, 6:30 – 8:30pm**

**Community Meeting Notes**

**Small Group #1**

- Distinction needs to be made between the Harriet McCormack and the Strand as a theater. As theater, either presenting organization or producing organization, as a non – profit you have programs. Jose gave his organization as an example of the theatre as presenters and producers.
- The question, is it feasible for both things to be done by the 501c3? Do we then categorize by one or the other?  
Part of success definition – vibrant performing arts center, we don't have such a facility in the area. This should be an important part. (FOCUS)!
- Clarification given as to RFP and the role of the city
- Clarification given as to ED – hired by the McCormack
- Clarification as to who was the McCormack
- Success Definition – City, funds given by the city would be an attraction to those taking it over, so keep this in. Capital, run the wires for good sound system within the wall. That there's a good system that not cords all over the floor. There is a state of the Art sound system that people can just come and plug in.
- Community Relief, place for community performers. People in the community should receive special prices that are less expensive.
- How much money did production generate? What types of programs come in and the number of seats sold?
- Link/partner with funding agencies or banking institutions for money, possibly rename with their name
- Allowing community to see the dress rehearsals of Chamber Theatre company. Especially inviting schools
- Partner with existing theatre companies
- Link with local universities or colleges to get expertise for – Well Fleet Arbor – they have a 90 seat theater. Could we make programming with theater writing groups?
- Community, Strand operates with lots of 1<sup>st</sup> time producers, do a theater production workshop for them to explore hidden costs
- City should help community – parking and traffic flow. General improvement that the city is committed to New groups should ask of this from the city. Work on the community infrastructure.
- Community, have/create a subscription base. Generate something that lets the community know what consistent programs are available. This gives them discounted tickets as well as regular information. Don't change the name, stronger marketing – beyond Dorchester and Roxbury

- Media, create a link through other Mayor's or city offices, websites, media to help, send it out, implement city wide broadcasting (media that opens to all audiences)
- Capital, arts and theater classes, open the gallery space to allow for this, put a stage in, this is a capital improvement. This would be strictly for classroom space, sink for art classes, scene shop
- Theatre that can employ residents in the community and teach them the trade and not just bringing in outside groups, small gallery space will allow for this, create the apprenticeship
- Open all of the time with some consistency, be open beyond just shows
- Create a coffee shop, something to attract people and compliment the theatre
- Box office open more
- Change front, no more steel grate front
- Community, make prices accessible to the community. Both shows and performance space should be a way to make it affordable
- Good balance between the theatre and programming, not just comedy shows each week
- A 7 day week organization that meets cultural needs of community as well as various ages
- Partnership with universities – originally thought to link with Umass, look into their theatre arts programs
- Occasionally higher cost events to support it
- Allow churches to continue to work there
- Collaborate with universities may bring a lot of other users in
- Variety of programming
- Look at something very successful that happened before and see if it can be revived

### **1. What is your definition of success for the Strand?**

- Bob Haas, frustrating, impediments to getting people, Strand cost to have people who are committed, relationship to the city – wonderful especially in terms of capital improvement, define capital improvement mechanism to take care of problems
- Investment, operate in the black
- Management, not positive level of professionalism
- 400 parking places available, need security, theatre needs to be lean, needs to have funds available, management to coordinate
- Successful, management confident to deal with transportation, shuttle = extend silver line, long term solutions
- Has to be producer friendly
- Effort to promote Strand as an asset to Upham's Corner
- Programming
  - Family activities, family movie night
  - Needs to be affordable
  - Market the Strand as different than Theater Districts
  - Regional management especially African-American Community
  - Varied spectrum available to multi-cultural audience
  - Quality – safe programming, collaboration with community-based theater to help grade and invest in programming
  - Realistic funding – management a lack of support

- Home to theater or dance company
- Community involvement/community control ownership for what goes ok, also need skills
- Management welcomes community – feel wanted

“Friends of Strand” – patrons, money and volunteers

- Capital Improvement
- Coffee shop, improve concessions
- Organ, people are gone, major pick for restoration of original theatre organs
- Light area, make feel safe, computerized theater sales, entrance dingy, inside and out
- Greenery out front, plants
- Improve general area, the city is asking people to put on blinders to rest of the community
- Priorities
  - Finding management, competent management system
  - Marketing/create strong image, alas Apollo Theatre “go to place committed to creativity” think outside the box
  - Seek funding to clean and charge normal fees to build base

## **Small Group # 2**

### **2. How Would You**

- Categories
  - Continued community involvement, large groups involved
  - Alive, mostly open vibrant
  - Short term/long term
  - Capital, surround system immediately, computerize ticket system
  - Strong community resource, well managed, fiscally sound, small for the future
  - Create an endowment (sustainable) that it can control
  - Well maintained and presented
  - Historicall character and upgrade
- Management
  - Shop of theatre to the community
  - Considered regularly and managed well
  - Hard to get people to go to the Strand
  - Pricing and transport
  - Visibility
  - Had to have truly committed people on board and staying on board
  - Attracting people from other parts of the city, the BAM used to have stigma, welcoming people, telling them how to get places, opening it up
  - Need behind them to do these things, effort to make it more welcoming if not enough resources – everything will go south
  - Not a problem with people attending, different mentality of leadership
  - Complaints of producers, rapport with management
  - Negative vibe, passed it on to audience
  - Level of professionalism
  - Focus orientation
  - Management, sounds equitable
  - The Strand is wonderful if turned right, not just capital
  - Maintenance, can't always wait, who needs to fix it? Need to define and take care of it right away
- Attract city/suburbs
  - 400 parking spaces coordinate with security
  - Inside needs to be cleaned, comfortable going into restrooms, need funds available for it
  - Take cab/public transportation
  - Will never meet 1400 seats for parking
  - Never will be fixed, focus on transportation
  - Need enforcement for parking (tickets)
  - Need real security
  - Security for cars
  - Upham's Corner needs to deal with parking in general, would all have to make a team
  - Management needs to be confident to deal with transportation

- The Silver line shuttle Commuter rail – this proposal is out there (like RCC)
- We can guarantee 1000 riders on a Saturday night
- We don't want to deal with them, producers savvy/friendly
- Strand is recognized as being an asset – an addition to wider community
- Community involvement in programming
  - Programming, make activities that engage families
  - Free Family movie night
  - Family friendly dramas
  - Affordable to people in the community
  - Market Strand as being very different from Wang, Schubert – unique, different want to encourage
  - Regional magnet (not just Boston) for African American and people of color
  - Cultural and artistic experiences that relate to her experiences
  - Mix of ethnicities, higher assets
  - Position paper with Strand that attract 500 + people, 100 + people, etc
  - Want a varied spectrum upheld to multicultural – Latino film festival, Cape Verdean
- Programs
  - Programs substandard disorganized, wants to stay in neighborhood
  - Ideals are there but quality, safety (children) is important
  - Collaboration with Boston artists, with out production companies who understand urban life and can be guides
  - Event needs the capacity to draw funds
  - Lot of movies were not there and people were not paid to do it
  - Strand, a home to a company theater, dance
  - Community involvement – definition
  - Community control, what is the definition
  - Hard to get community participation
  - Ownership in community, with operating theatre (Community resources don't necessarily have it)
  - Sense that past operations didn't want community control
  - Want people who invite/welcome community involvement, need to feel that you are wanted
  - People with skills in the industry, people with committed friends of the Strand group, patrons, consultant money, time (volunteer), clean
- Capital
  - Choices of coffee shop with improved concession stand
  - Organ, theater organs restoration
  - Full restoration and recreation
  - Area seems dark and not safe, need lightning
  - Entrance is dingy
  - Inside lights
  - Plasters, spots
  - Capital improvement to the rest of the Columbia road, not just about Strand, also whole neighborhood

**“Success means”**

1. Competent people, management of the Strand, the theatre operation and committed to creativity and innovation (explore new ways of programming)
2. Continued funding to fund the place
3. Strong consistent, patrons, funders, individual, community
4. Strand as community resource
5. Improve image and great marketing – like Appolo, a go to place
6. Worry – how do we get from great conversation to a place it could happen
7. How do we create a team that is diverse enough to make it happen
8. Need accountability, who makes sure the plan gets done
9. Proactive about putting the right players together
10. What is a procedure for implementing capital improvements
11. Need to coordinate improvements
12. Need a system to implement
13. Watchdog group to watch the discussion
14. Has the city identified how we got where we are, now? Capital needs and management?

### **Small Group #3**

#### **“What is your vision of success for the Strand Theatre?”**

##### **1. Vision of success**

- Strand needs professional programming – must embrace
- Place where people are out the city to celebrate diversity where art is not snobby intro to music affordable
- Celebrate the neighborhood, make rent reasonable – people must be able to afford theatre
- Shelter management, cleaners, shelter box office, inclusive, diverse
- Fiscally responsible, educational involvement, high quality programming, internship programs, connect with institutions looking to give money, more funding and private public sectors, success must be evident
- Educate, implement and display

##### **2. Performing groups invited...realistic operational cost, accessible, display art, youth programming, tuition for youth performers**

- Upham’s Corner/Main Street strong thriving programming
- Community access
- Improving physical plant
- Need industry of the Strand Theatre

##### **3. Priority**

- Sound system
- Lighting
- Computerized box office

##### **4. Volunteers**

- Afraid the theatre will not be for the community once the change occurs
- Won’t be for the community any more, shut out in the future
- Theatre needs cleaning, make the theatre inviting to all communities
- A solid management team
- Community pushed on and (person from Ashmont area) concerned about car getting stolen
- Safety is an issue
- Locals are concerned about safety
- Theatre events
  - Safe place to attend programs
  - Other uses beyond theater
- Theatre aid business if its safe
- Theatre will benefit from money from outside
- Perception that it’s not safe
- J.P. resident: Theatre doesn’t sell out parking issue questionable?
  - Community is served by the theatre
  - Brooklyn Acad. Success idea
- City worker: serve the community teen

- Youth programming
  - Inspirational speaker
  - Channel 2 programs
  - Use public access to highlight the work at the theatre
- Hard work is crystallizing the thrust of the theatre...community, city...central thrust
- How to make the visions successful?
- How theaters develop throughout the city, they don't need to be consistent, decide what you want to do, distinctive confidence and follow that line of a pro.
- What should we avoid at all costs?
  - Base the old perception of the theatre
  - Hold down ticket price
- What if...
  - No concern about failure
  - What would you do?
  - Money, no hindrance?
- Significant youth education program, affordable, fun, successful
- Diversity pulled from all over the city, children monitoring program, film, video, partner

## **5. Priorities**

- Youth/education programs
- Maintain relationship with community
- Renew physical plant
- Change old perception of the Strand Theatre
- Maintain community involvement in the Theatre
- Need to determine the principal trust of the Yheatre
- Mainstream with other community establishing an inside/outside connection
- Transportation safety issue

## **6. Concerns**

- Acknowledge e – mails
- Ideas from the community